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Developing IS Courses Around COVID-19 Pandemic

TREO – Technology, Research, Education, Opinion

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Abstract

This paper discusses the importance of incorporating and teaching essential public health concepts into information systems (IS) courses. The merger of public health and information systems, commonly known as Public Health Informatics, is a well-established area (Hernandez et al. 2003). Public Health Informatics is the systematic application of information, computer science, and technology to public health practice and learning (Yasnoff et al. 2000). However, most IS textbooks and courses do not introduce the application of IS in public health. Moreover, the exponential use of data visualizations to understand the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has raised the fundamental questions, should we, the IS educators, focus more on the public health informatics field? Should we teach public health-related concepts to our students? Should we include public health informatics courses in our core IS curriculum?

As information systems educators, we must equip our students with a basic understanding of public health concepts while teaching information systems courses. We also believe that IS educators and scholars are best equipped to do this. This paper presents benefits, strategies, and methods of incorporating public health and epidemiology related concepts into information systems courses. We also provide examples and cases-studies to show various ways in which public health concepts can be taught in an information systems course. More specifically, we provide a case study of using the COVID-19 related dataset while teaching a business intelligence course. We have found that using COVID-19 related datasets in a business intelligence course helps students to understand the severity of the disease, develop critical thinking, and create awareness about the challenges presented to healthcare and frontline workers.

Keywords: COVID-19, IS teaching, health informatics, public health

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